

*On a Party Line Vote, Committee Rejects Lowey-Hinchey Amendment to Make Shale Gas Panel Unbiased and Impartial*

Washington, DC - House Appropriations Committee Republicans today rejected an amendment offered by Congresswoman Nita Lowey (D-NY) and Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) that would have prevented natural gas industry executives from serving on what is supposed to be a neutral federal advisory panel on shale gas drilling. The Lowey-Hinchey amendment would have eliminated report language authored by House Republicans that would force the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) to have at least one-third of the members on the newly-created Natural Gas Subcommittee of the Secretary of Energy Advisory Board be shale gas industry representatives.

The Lowey-Hinchey amendment was offered during a markup of the Fiscal Year 2012 Energy and Water Appropriations bill and was rejected by the Republican majority on the Appropriations Committee in a party line vote. Currently, the DOE has filled six of the seven panel slots, including the chairman position, with individuals who have financial ties to companies involved with hydraulic fracturing operations. The Republican measure, which Lowey and Hinchey were unable to overcome, would require the DOE to replace or add panel members with individuals who are employed by the very shale gas industry the panel is supposed to independently assess.

"It is outrageous that the Republican majority opposed our common-sense effort to ensure members of federal advisory boards are unbiased and without conflicts of interest," said Lowey. "Allowing the shale gas industry to put a thumb on the scale of this board makes it more likely that the decisions it makes will focus more on profits and less on the safety of our water sources, Americans' health, and environmental preservation."

"Federal advisory boards are supposed to be unbiased, impartial bodies that advise our agencies, but almost everyone who currently serves on the shale gas advisory panel has direct financial ties to the oil and shale gas industry," said Hinchey. "Now the Republican majority is calling for an even greater bias by requiring that one-third of the panel work directly on behalf of the shale gas industries. This isn't an honest effort to give industry a seat at the table. Instead,

it's a blatant attempt to rig the decisions of the panel in favor of industry and against the safety and security of our environment, drinking water and public health."

A number of recent reports and incidents are raising serious concerns about hydraulic fracturing. A study by researchers at Duke University found a statistically significant correlation between methane contamination of drinking water wells and their proximity to shale gas drilling sites. On April 20th of this year thousands of gallons of hydraulic fracturing fluid spilled into the Susquehanna River watershed, following a major fracking well blowout in Leroy Township, PA.

The text of the amendment, which was rejected on a party line vote follows:

Pages 99 and 100, strike "The Committee is concerned that the selected panel members will not adequately represent industry perspectives, and therefore will not foster a spirit of partnership among industry, environmental, and governmental parties. In order to strengthen these partnerships and industry support for any subsequent recommendations, no less than one-third of panel members should be industry representatives who actively work in the shale gas industry. Further, the" and insert "The".